

CHURCH HISTORY

Lesson 12 The Church in North America: 1600 A.D. to Present

In the last lesson, we looked at the Reformation and the link between Martin Luther, Zwingli, John Calvin, and John Knox, leading to the creation of the Presbyterian and Anglican churches. We discussed the common elements running through these church movements, getting the Bible translated into the common language of the people and church leadership elected by the people - with the exception of course of the Anglican Church, which also authorized having the Bible translated into the common language, but had the head of the Church appointed by the King.

We also observed that differences in basic theology primarily hinged on the acceptance or rejection of Catholic doctrine. In the case of Luther, his original desire was to work for change inside the Catholic Church, while the Anglican Church looked to keeping Catholic doctrine in tact, but refused to recognize the Papacy and Papal rule.

We concluded our last lesson by looking at the role of the early Puritans and discovered they had been given that label because of their desire that the Anglican Church be "pure" - meaning free from anything "popish", relating to the Pope or the Papacy. Eventually they would break from the Anglican Church to form their own following. And finally, we saw that during all of the changes undergoing the church via the reformers, and the formation of the Anglican Church as they left the Catholic Church, the Irish remained steadfast in their loyalty to the Catholic Church and the Pope and revolted against English rule.



With this background: Germans with the Lutheran movement, Scottish, Swiss and British Presbyterianism and the Irish, Spanish and French alliance with the Catholic Church; we prepare to set sail for the new world. Looking for a place to practice religious freedom or escape the rule of the monarchy. You can already imagine what will develop as people from so many different cultures and religious backgrounds converge on the new world and the aborigine natives living there who also have their own ideas about God and national rule.

Should you ever get to visit the colonial village of Williamsburg in Virginia you will see posted there a large map of the United States dating back to the time of the very early settlers. It has three shaded colors running horizontally across the map. One color shades the Northern piece from the American/Canadian Border North -- and is labeled "French"; a second color shades the United States with the exception of southern Florida and Southern California and is labeled "British"; and the third section shades all of the land south and is labeled "Spanish". The purpose of course is point out the dominant government that settled each part of the North American Continent.

But consider for a moment what we now know about religion in England and Europe and you will quickly see a direct link between the religious leanings of each these three broad areas; as they were, and still are, affected by the religions of the lands that settled them. You can quickly see why the Catholic Church would have dominated the Canadian and Southern portions of the Continent, since it was the predominant Church of the French and Spanish; while Protestantism and Denominationalism were predominant in the United States.

Against this backdrop, let's now look at the Church coming to North America as we conclude our twelve week study.

1. Can you find a definition for “denominationalism” and what caused it?
2. What does “lay control” mean and how does it relate to denominationalism?
3. Beginning in the early 1600s the Virginia Company was chartered to settle and exploit land in America. Where did it send out settlers in 1607 and which Church were they to establish at that settlement?
4. In 1693 who founded the college of William and Mary - and what Church did he represent?
5. In 1702 what church became the established church of Maryland?
6. The Catholic Church opposed the Anglican Church in Maryland and did not want it to be recognized or established. Prior to this religious toleration had been permitted by what famous Lord in Maryland?
7. What do New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia have in common during this period?
8. The Puritans had a significant impact on the congregational movement within the US and in the New England area in particular. When several colonies in New England agreed on the Westminster Confession they drew up a document called the Cambridge Platform in 1648. What did this platform declare?
9. John Eliot (1604-1690) became the pastor of the Puritan Roxbury Church in New England and began working among the local Indians spreading the gospel. What did he write in the native Indian tongue that helped spread the gospel message?
10. What Denomination was started in Rhode Island in 1639 by Roger Williams a Puritan, educated for the Anglican ministry at Cambridge?
11. Pennsylvania became home to the Quakers, Mennonites, Monroviens, the Lutherans, and a variety of other churches. Why was Pennsylvania such an attraction to so many religious groups?
12. The Baptists had developed a system of farmer Preachers who reached out into the local community to spread the gospel. The introduction of England’s Methodism into the colonies also aided in the quick spread of the gospel and the rapid spread of Baptists and Methodists throughout the early colonies. What method did the Methodists use that helped evangelize the colonies?
13. From the Revolutionary War forward the Church in America became instrumental in creating revivals, missions, missionaries, evangelists, camp meetings, volunteerism, Sunday School, Mid-Week Service, and lay-centered activities just to name a few. And, in my mind, when you consider all the great names in this period of church history none other stands out more than Evangelist Dwight L. Moody. He began something that would be carried on by Rueben Torrey, Gypsy Smith, Billy Sunday, and today Billy Graham. What was it?

There is still so much more; we’ve really only touched upon the surface. But what we have seen is that Christ has remained as the center and the head of the Church, and that in spite of man’s desires, conflicts, and governmental upheavals, the gospel – the Good News that Christ died for our sins, continues to be spread to this day throughout the world.

I hope this study has given you a little deeper insight into our spiritual and organizational roots and has inspired you to want to do more to get the message of salvation out to everyone.

Have a great week everyone and thanks for studying with us!

In Christ,

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